

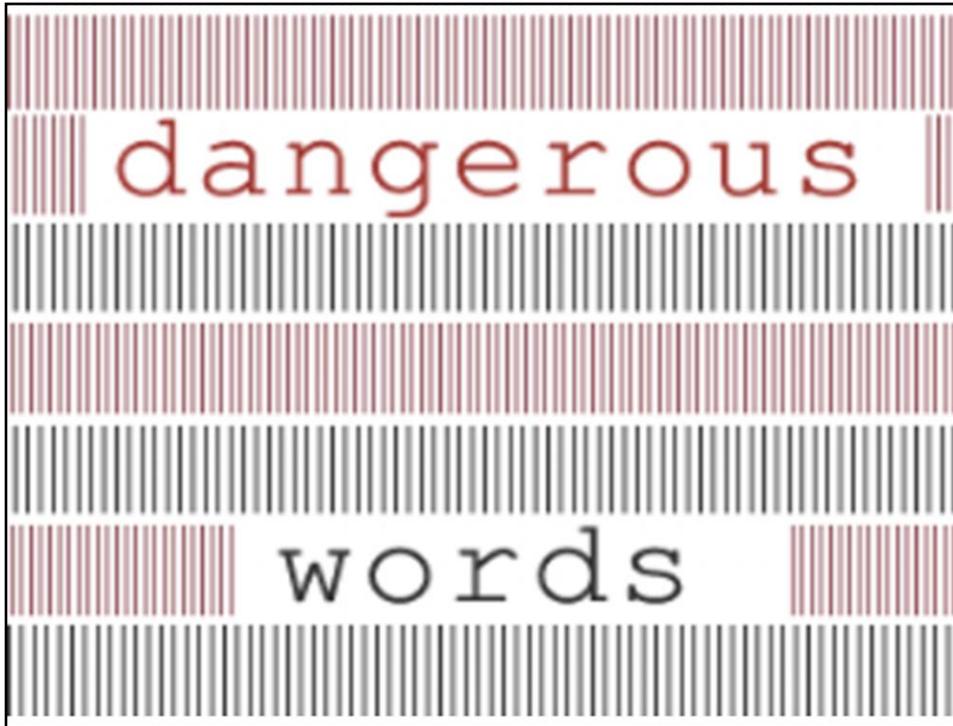


No matter how you may think about it, the words penned by the Gospel authors describing the events of the Transfiguration make for a gripping read and its no doubt why the event is always included in any film about the life of Jesus.



The line from this Specsavers ad is?
'What am I not seeing?'

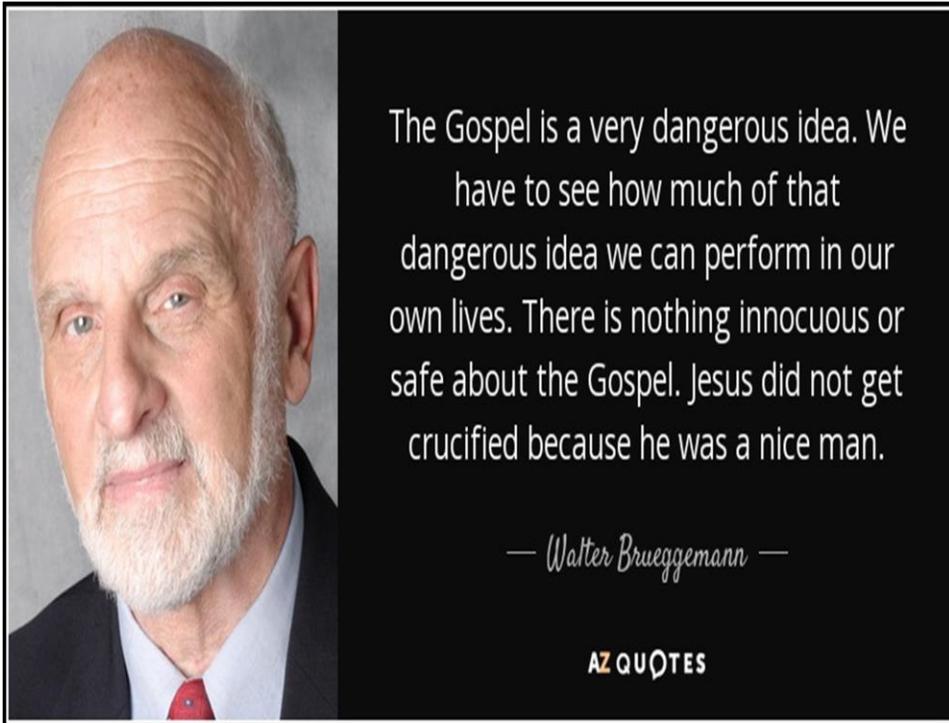
Yet perhaps we do we not see all that is in the narrative because we have the short vision of seeing the events only from our view point, culture and context?



What Mark wrote were dangerous words.

His description of Jesus, what happened and what the 3 disciples and later told the others (otherwise how would it have been recorded for us) put Jesus and the disciples on the wrong side of everybody.

The account of Jesus' Transfiguration in itself would set Jesus and his disciples at odds with every sector of Palestinian society.



This isn't necessarily a totally new insight or way of looking at the Gospels – it is more of the fact that we have may have let the sharp edge of the Gospel narratives become blunt by our familiarity of them.

We should always think of the Gospels as dangerous and never as being dull.



As we unpack the narrative, we also start to see how it becomes a collection of dangerous words and images.

The reference to Jesus's clothes becoming dazzling white, carries an association straight back to Moses on Mt Sinai (Ex 34: 24) likewise Jesus ascending a mountain like Moses – heaven coming down to earth also links with Elijah (2 Kings 2: 1 -12) being taken up to heaven, after the chariots of heaven came for Elijah. The symbolism would not be lost on any Jewish people in an account of the events.



Certainly the Jewish religious leaders and teachers of the law would have had no hesitation in wanting Jesus executed even sooner than they eventually managed. They would have been outraged at the oral and later the written account of Jesus' Transfiguration.

But the symbolism of what happened on the mountain with Jesus would not have been lost on the Romans either, especially Pilate, friend to Caesar.



The Caesar at the time of Jesus' ministry was Tiberius.

Tiberius was the grandson of Julius Caesar and Tiberius' father was Octavian.

This is where you need to stay with me for a very brief delve into Roman history and how come they thought Caesar was a god.

(However after Tiberius died, the Roman Senate refused to acknowledge that Tiberius was god; he was demoted from being divine)



Octavion, Tiberius's father, declared that his father Julius was a god and that at his death he had been taken back to heaven to sit at the right hand of Zeus, the supreme god. To prove this, he noted that a bright comet had appeared in the sky during Julius' funeral procession and that this was a sign that that Julius was being taken back up to heaven to take his immortalised place among the other gods. So he argued, Julius was indeed a god and was in fact in heaven seated at the right hand of Zeus, then the logical conclusion was that Octavion was the, "son of god"!



So dangerous words to the Romans too...even being suspected of putting yourself on the wrong side of the Roman authorities only ever led to one place....the same place Jesus went to on that Passover Good Friday.

It was common knowledge that crucifixion was the primary punishment for anyone deemed to be an enemy of the Roman Empire.



Another more gentle aspect of the narrative is Sukkot – the festival of booths; this refers back to Zechariah 14: 1- 18

1. **A day of the LORD is coming**, Jerusalem, when your possessions will be plundered and divided up within your very walls....

18. The LORD will bring on them the plague he inflicts on the nations that do not go up to celebrate **the Festival of Tabernacles**.

Was Peter making the link between the prophecy of Zechariah, what he was witnessing and the instruction to celebrate the feast of tabernacles – also known as Sukkot?



The fiery cloud of God's presence would have had an immediate connection in the minds of the 3 disciples who were witnesses to Jesus's transfiguration - to the fiery cloud of God at the Tent of Meeting that was part of the life of the Jews as they were led through the wilderness to their Promised Land.

Why did Jesus take 3 disciples?

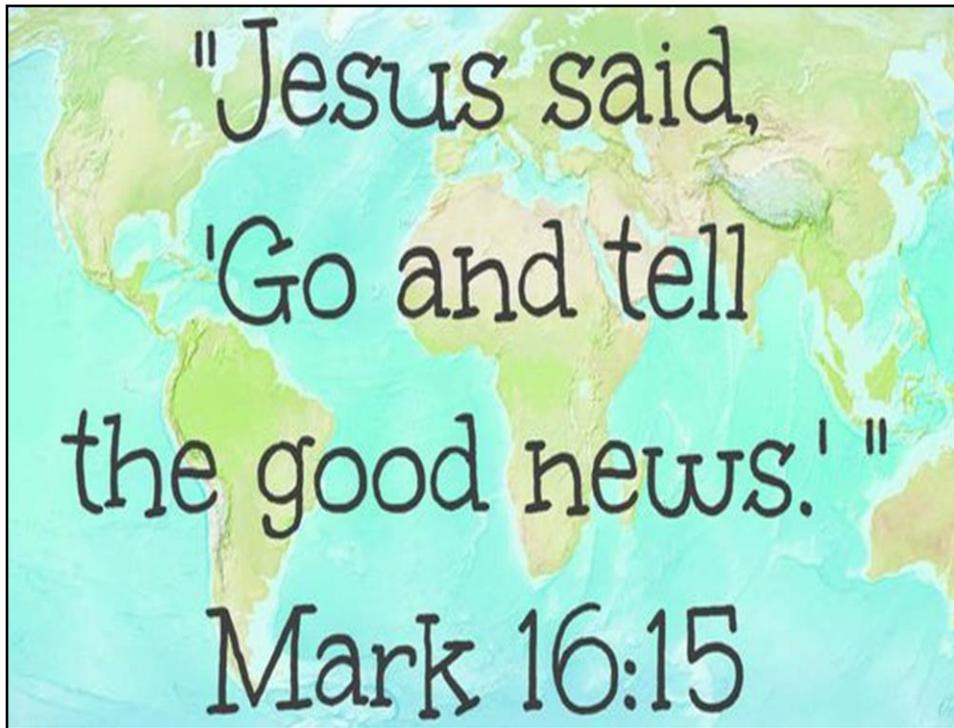
Jewish Law says in Deuteronomy 17: 6 that for a testimony to have credibility there has to be 2 or 3 witnesses...hence Jesus takes 3 disciples to give proof (accordingly to the law) of what had occurred.

**WISE PEOPLE SAY
NOTHING IN
DANGEROUS TIMES.**

After seeing His revealed Divine Transfigured Self, Jesus tells the three disciples to say nothing until after His Resurrection.

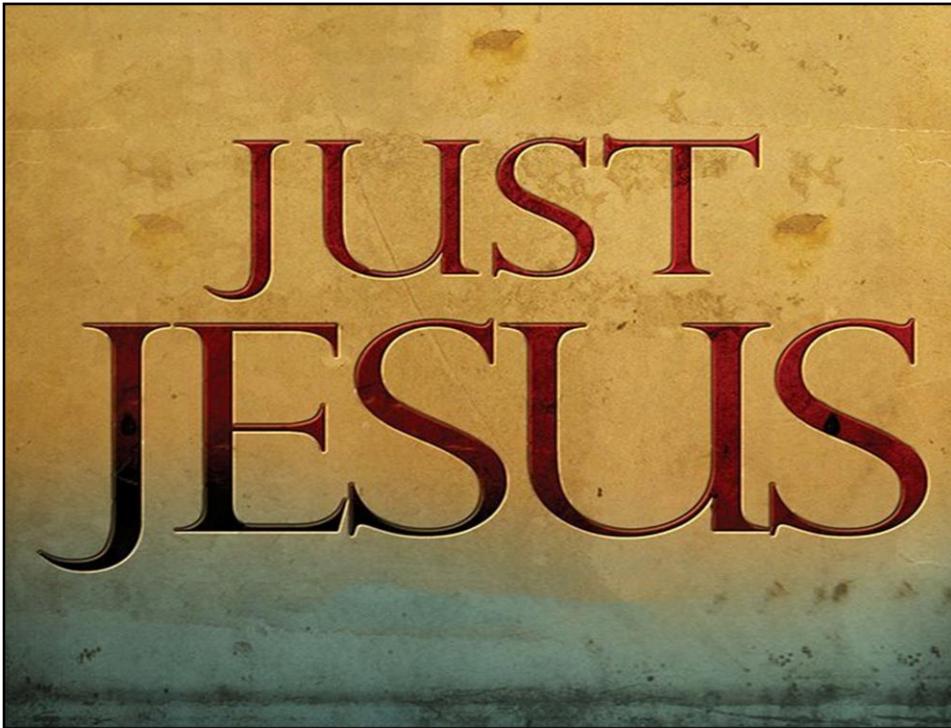
Given what we have learned of the potential dangerous, explosive and radical nature of the events and the retelling of them it's no wonder!

But after Easter Day the verbal 'gloves are off'



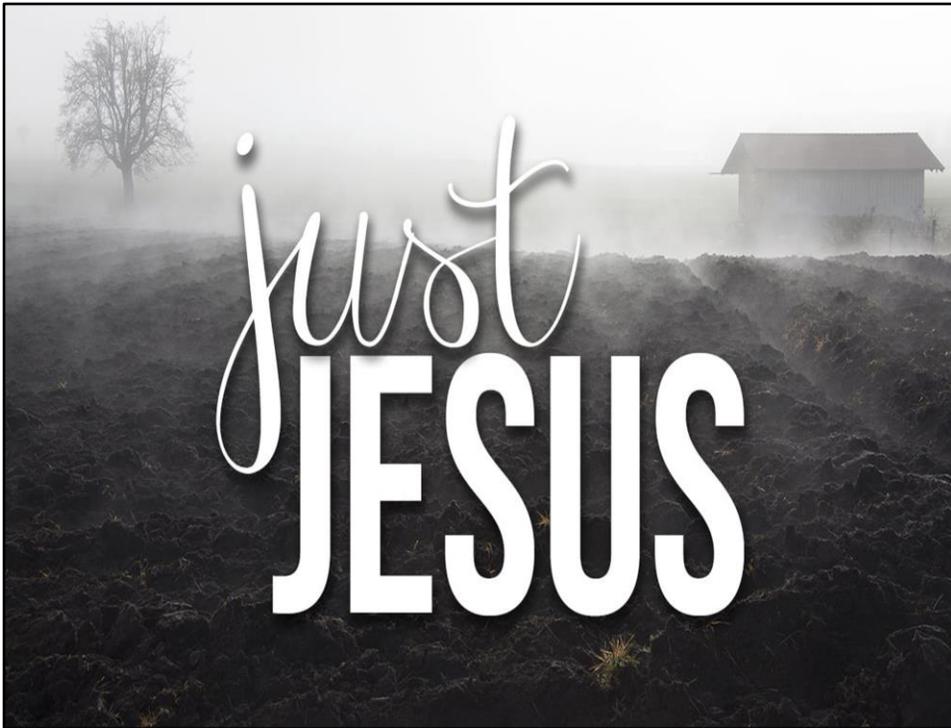
Not only do they no longer have to keep quiet about what they saw on Mt Hermon, but post resurrection, Jesus commands all His disciples, not just the 3, to go and tell everyone!

No longer silent, but bold with it!



Most people carry an image within them of how they think of Jesus; where it's the baby in the manger, the Healer, the Comforter, the Calmer of storms, the crucified Jesus, the Resurrected Jesus or the Transfigured Jesus...yet when the 3 disciples walked back down the mountain...it was them and 'just Jesus'.

The Jesus who knew them, who looked like them, shared life with them, the Jesus who one day would die for them, and on another day would show them He had conquered death...but for that moment it was 'just Jesus'.



For us, all we need is ‘just Jesus’ – the One who loves us and shares our life with us.

Yes there will be top of the mountain moments – when we are lost in worship of who Jesus is and what He has done for us.

For the most part it is knowing that Jesus is with us in the ordinary stuff of life, the tough stuff of life and the unexpected stuff of life.

Because we know the Jesus of and on the mountain top we can be sure of Him when all we need is ‘just Jesus’. The last words of Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel are ‘And surely I am with **you** always, to the very end of the age.’”